Salvation can be understood in three phases: justification, sanctification, and glorification. When a sinner repents of their sins and God forgives them, they stand covered by the blood of Jesus and receive no condemnation (Rom. 5:6–11). This standing before God as if you had never sinned is termed “justification.”

Barring a deathbed conversion, most Christians must continue to live their lives on this earth after they have had a life-transforming encounter with Christ that leads them to repent. What then? Paul asks and answers this question in Romans 6:1, 2. After that conversion experience comes living a new life in accordance with God’s will. Every day the converted individual must choose behaviors that they will not need to later repent of. As they make these decisions day by day, empowered by the grace of God, they become a different person. This daily walk is termed sanctification.

A saint who is undergoing this sanctification process may unwittingly transgress God’s law, and will need His justifying grace to cover them (Prov. 4:18). They also may knowingly transgress and need to repent even as they continue walking with God in the process of sanctification. So justification and sanctification work in tandem in our salvation experience.

One day Christ will return to destroy sin and its effects. Then these bodies that are inclined to sinfulness will be glorified, thus completing our salvation. In this and the next lesson we will consider the first two facets of the salvation experience and the Sabbath.
Write out Deuteronomy 5:12–15 from the Bible translation of your choice. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.
CREATION AND REDEMPTION

God prefaces the Ten Commandments with a statement about salvation: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Exod. 20:2; Deut. 5:6). It is because He has redeemed the Israelites from bondage that God now expects a certain type of behavior. He does not require perfect conformity to the Law as a prerequisite to Israel’s deliverance. The deliverance comes first.

Indeed, the Israelites participated in their deliverance from Egypt. They had to sprinkle the blood on their doorposts and partake of the Passover meal (Exod. 12:12, 13). And when it was time to leave, they had to heed the command to go (Exod. 12:50, 51). Their actions, however, carried no merit in themselves. Eating lamb “roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs” (Exod. 12:8), “with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand” (Exod. 12:11), and sprinkling “blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts” (Exod. 12:23) on any other day would not have resulted in their freedom. It is God who delivered them, and by their actions they cooperated with God’s meritorious work.

The theme of redemption is repeated in the articulation of the fourth commandment in Deuteronomy: “And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day” (Deut. 5:15). Whereas the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, God brought them out and gave them rest from their slave labor. In remembrance of the rest that they received through their deliverance from Egypt, the Israelites were to keep the Sabbath each week.

There is no conflict between the rationale for Sabbath observance given in Exodus and that given in Deuteronomy. Nothing short of creation power would suffice to recreate (Eph. 4:24) a life once “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). It is the same power active at creation as at redemption, and Sabbath observance binds these two events in our consciousness. Had He not created us, Christ could not redeem us. Thus, a day memorializing His work of creation buttresses our confidence in His redemption.

In the beginning, God created everything else before He created humanity. By the time Adam and Eve entered the scene, God had completed His work. In this way, humanity could never claim any merit for creation even though God assigned Adam and Eve the task to “tend and keep it” (Gen. 2:15). Their work of keeping the Garden of Eden carried no merit in the work of creating Eden in the first place. As we keep the Sabbath each week, we are reminded that inasmuch as our keeping the Sabbath does not make it holy, so cooperating with God in His work of salvation in our lives bears no merit.
THE PARADOX

There is a tendency to overemphasize one aspect of Philippians 2:12, 13 over the other. Either we focus on working out our “own salvation with fear and trembling” or we zero in on the fact that “it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12, 13, KJV). It is hard for us to conceive of how both statements could be true at the same time.

In the first instance, the Bible is clear in Ephesians 2:8: salvation is God’s free gift! And in case you missed it, Paul doubles down in verse 9: “Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Clearly, then, Paul is in agreement with Philippians 2:13. Salvation is God’s work in us. Yet it is this same Paul who penned verse 12 instructing God’s followers to “work out” their salvation.

Many Christians view biblical imperatives as a vestige of Old Testament religion that was done away with when Christ came. This view is often associated with a misunderstanding of the old and new covenants in Scripture. (For a thorough study of the old and new covenants, look up the inVerse study guide on Decoding the Covenants.) Yet the New Testament is replete with directives. In fact, much of Paul’s writing alternates between theology and exhortation—and his exhortations are loaded with verbs in the imperative mood. There is, apparently, a work we must undertake for our own salvation. And while this work cannot save us, we also cannot be saved without engaging in it.

With no effort on our part, the Sabbath is holy. It is holy because God declared it thus. Yet, we cannot experience the blessings God has infused in the Sabbath experience unless we enter into that Sabbath rest. When we keep the Sabbath holy, we do not infuse it with holiness—the holiness is already there. But we cannot partake of its holiness unless we do something, that is, unless we choose to enter into its rest (more on this in lesson 7).

God has made salvation available to us, but we will not benefit from said salvation unless we choose to accept it. This choice is the work we must do for our salvation. We must daily choose to let God work in our lives. It takes concerted effort to keep our eyes focused on Jesus. While God will supply the strength needed to maintain a focus on Christ, this is a task we must engage. And it could not be otherwise because God will never force salvation on anyone. We must choose to obey, through His strength. The choice bears no salvific merit, yet without it we cannot be saved.
What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Isaiah 55:1, 2
Matthew 11:28–30
Philippians 2:12, 13
Ephesians 4:17–24
Colossians 2:6

What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with Deuteronomy 5:12–15?

Review your memorized verse from Deuteronomy 5:12–15.
When Jesus created the Sabbath as a day of rest at the close of the creation week (Gen. 2:1–3), it was so that He would invite us into its rest (Mark 2:27). As was discussed in lesson 4, even in a sinless world, that rest signified the recognition of dependence upon God. When sin entered the world, though, the rest came to mean even more.

Because they sinned, the peace that Adam and Eve once experienced was replaced by fear (Gen. 3:10). A mind at rest has peace, but humanity had abandoned their peace. Now fear, anxiety, and stress dominated their purview. Jesus promises a peace unlike that which the world gives: “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). The peace that Jesus gives eradicates fear, thus bringing in its train freedom to live abundantly (cf. John 10:10).

Not only was their internal life reordered, but the relationship between Adam and Eve was sullied. In the place of loving companionship (Gen. 2:22–25) was now blame and distrust (Gen. 3:11–13). As a foreshadowing of Christ’s ministry, John the Baptist was prophesied “to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children” (Luke 1:17). Christ enshrined in the heart brings healing to broken relationships (Eph. 2:14–18).

Of prime importance is the peace that Christ brings between humanity and God (2 Cor. 5:18, 19). This peace is accomplished through His salvation: “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). The adversarial relationship (Rom. 5:10) is replaced by a filial one (John 1:12).

Comprehensively speaking, Christ offers humanity rest from sin’s labor. Romans 6 tells us that “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). You receive wages when you have worked. The text tells us that sin’s wages is death. So, we may deduce that sin is work. It is back-breaking work that is ultimately unsatisfying (Isa. 55:2). Jesus invites us to enter into the rest of His salvation from sin.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:28–30).
FROM GOD ONLY

There are rights which belong to every individual. We have an individuality and an identity that is our own. No one can submerge his identity in that of any other. All must act for themselves, according to the dictates of their own conscience. As regards our responsibility and influence, we are amenable to God as deriving our life from Him. This we do not obtain from humanity, but from God only. We are His by creation and by redemption. Our very bodies are not our own, to treat as we please, to cripple by habits that lead to decay, making it impossible to render to God perfect service. Our lives and all our faculties belong to Him. He is caring for us every moment; He keeps the living machinery in action; if we were left to run it for one moment, we should die. We are absolutely dependent upon God. (White, Counsels on Diet and Foods, 56.)

On the Sabbath we have thought upon His goodness. We have beheld His work in creation as an evidence of His power in redemption. Our hearts are filled with thankfulness for His great love. And now, before the toil of a week begins, we return to Him His own, and with it an offering to testify our gratitude. Thus our practice will be a weekly sermon, declaring that God is the possessor of all our property, and that He has made us stewards to use it to His glory. Every acknowledgment of our obligation to God will strengthen the sense of obligation. Gratitude deepens as we give it expression, and the joy it brings is life to soul and body. (Ellen G. White, Counsels on Stewardship (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1940), 80.)

Love, the basis of creation and of redemption, is the basis of true education. (Ellen G. White, Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1913), 32.)

To all who receive the Sabbath as a sign of Christ’s creative and redeeming power, it will be a delight. Seeing Christ in it, they delight themselves in Him. The Sabbath points them to the works of creation as an evidence of His mighty power in redemption. While it calls to mind the lost peace of Eden, it tells of peace restored through the Saviour. And every object in nature repeats His invitation, “Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28. (White, The Desire of Ages, 289.)
Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

Describe your justification and sanctification experience.

What is more lacking in people’s experiences today, justification or sanctification?

How do you connect your Sabbath-keeping with creation and redemption?

What does the experience look like when it is based only on the “work out” phrase?

What does the experience look like when it is based without the “work out” phrase?

How does the Sabbath help with the reliance of grace and the necessity of the choice?

Explain the experience of rest from sin’s labor.

How have you connected the rest from work to the rest experience of salvation?